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National adapted qualification concept for the Job Coach for persons with disabilities

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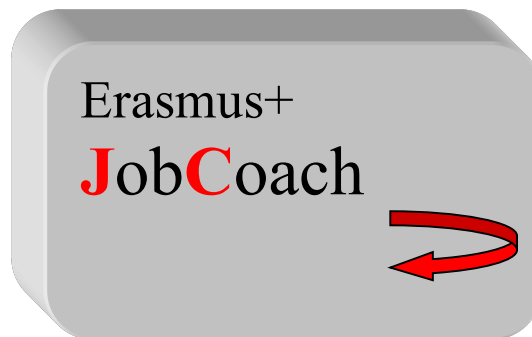
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Erasmus+ - project „Job coach for persons with disabilities”



National adapted qualification concept for the Job Coach for persons with disabilities

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The national adapted qualification concept for further training to become a Job Coach for persons with disabilities was developed under the leadership of the project partner Grone-Bildungszentrum NRW gGmbH. Each project partner country and its corresponding partner organisation is responsible regarding the development of its country specific national qualification concept. Partner organisations are as follows:

	Grone Niedersachsen GmbH Germany
	Grone-Bildungszentrum NRW gGmbH Germany
 FH MÜNSTER University of Applied Sciences	Fachhochschule Münster Germany
	Cordaan Netherlands
 Queen's University Belfast	Queen's University Belfast UK
	Les Genêts d'Or France
 WSPARCIE SPOŁECZNE JA - TY - MY	Stowarzyszenie Wsparcie Społeczne ja Ty My Poland

Introduction

This document is the outcome of a European project that aimed to develop an internationally recognized **qualification profile** for job coaches, to facilitate the social and economic inclusion of people with developmental, cognitive and mental health problems.

Although the role of ‘Job Coach for person with disabilities’ does not currently have the status of an established profession within the European Union, there is common agreement that their main professional task is to provide personal on-site assistance in employment for persons with specific health needs¹. As a result, the partner organizations, representing five European nations, set out to design ‘Job Coaching’ as a new occupation in the 2423 (Personnel and Careers Professional) group² within the European Skills, Competences Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) system³. Currently, as a non-registered occupation, the position of Job Coach is not regulated within the European Qualification Framework for lifelong learning (EQF), and this is an issue that the present project aimed to address.

Background: Qualification frameworks in the UK

The framework for qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is arranged in levels, from *entry* to *Level 8*⁴. Scotland has a separate system of educational qualifications, laid out in the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework⁵. Qualifications at the same level are of a similar level of difficulty, but obviously, the content and length of study can vary. These levels can be used to compare the wide range of qualifications available in the UK and, increasingly commonly, in Europe. There is a Register of Regulated Qualifications⁶ that can help determine the level of a particular UK qualification, and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)⁷ can be used for comparison with European Union qualifications. Other overseas qualifications can be compared using the service provided by the National Recognition Information Centre (NARIC)⁸, although there is a cost attached.

EQF: European Qualification Framework⁹

¹ H. R Röttgers & C.Metje, *European quality standards for the profession Job Coach for persons with disabilities*, 2016.

² www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/docs/resol08.doc

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/overview>

⁵ See <http://scqf.org.uk/>

⁶ See <https://www.gov.uk/find-a-regulated-qualification>

⁷ See http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/search/site?f%5B0%5D=im_field_entity_type%3A97

⁸ See <http://ecctis.co.uk/naric/>

⁹ <http://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk/european-qualifications-framework-eqf.html>

The European Qualification Framework¹⁰ (EQF) is a European-wide qualifications framework that allows the mapping of qualifications in different EU countries, making comparisons easier to understand. The EQF was formally adopted by the European Parliament in 2008. The UK has completed the cross reference of its frameworks – the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

1. Starting position of the Job coach position in the United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom (UK), there are current National Occupational Standards (NOS) that specifically address the position of Job Coach. These are included in the guidelines for Supported Employment (LSI SE00) developed by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service. They lay down the criteria for personalised support services within the sector, based on governmental best practice guidelines published in 2011. At present, support providers can have a number of different titles, including Job Coach, Employment Support Officer, or Employment Consultant. In the workplace environment, line managers and colleagues may also act as support providers, a role defined as ‘natural support’ (HM Government, 2011). Service users can access supported employment opportunities through referral from a number of agencies, including Job Centres, as well as school and colleges.

The National Occupational Standards (NOS) aim to ensure ‘high quality, personalised support for people with disabilities and/or disadvantages that enables them to seek, access, and retain employment in the open labour market. It is ‘a "place and train" approach that does not rely on long periods of pre-vocational training or a basic level of qualification or experience’ (LSI SE00, p.8). However, the NOS performance criteria ‘do not equate directly to qualifications, but can be used to inform and underpin relevant competency-based qualifications for supported employment practitioners’ (LSI SE00, p.2).

As the position of Job Coach is not strictly defined in the UK, individuals carrying out the task come from a variety of backgrounds and hold a range of qualifications, that may be certified by a number of awarding bodies. Many organisations that provide employment support for people with disabilities welcome applications from people with relevant employment experience and a variety of qualifications to fulfil the role of Job Coach, and they then provide tailored training courses for successful candidates.

¹⁰ <http://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk/european-qualifications-framework-eqf.html>

1.1 Prerequisite for the Job coach position

Given that individuals with disabilities should have as wide a range of employment opportunities as possible, people wishing to pursue a Job Coaching career should come from a variety of backgrounds but should then undergo specific training to fulfil the role. As noted in the European Qualification profile (Product 2), a clear specification of the essential and desirable qualifications, and pathways to obtaining these, will be necessary. To this end, the framework of the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) Internet platform is used to determine Job Coach placement in European occupational classification systems, and in designing the job description and possible qualification pathways.

1.2 Target group for the qualification

Given the need for an individually tailored, rather than a 'one-size-fits-all', approach to disability support, the Project focused on three specific disability groups: autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, and a range of mental health conditions (Product 5). These groups include the most frequently diagnosed forms of psychological/psychiatric conditions¹¹; in addition, individuals diagnosed with these conditions (depending on the severity of their disability) are among those most likely to seek active participation in employment. However, people who have received these specific clinical diagnoses represent a wide spectrum of disability and therefore require a highly-specialized Job Coaching approach.

2. Education: The didactic concept

It was agreed by all partner institutions that an academic qualification for the position of Job Coach, such as a Bachelor's degree (EQF6) should be mandatory, in the longer term, although higher level qualifications (e.g. a Master's degree) might be useful for those supporting individuals in the scientific sector. It is anticipated that a dedicated academic Job Coach course will be developed in due course, but a relevant qualification may also be based on a Bachelor's degree e.g. in social work or occupational therapy, with mandatory postgraduate training.

2.1 The educational challenges

Given that there is no current standardised qualification or job specification, transitional arrangements will be necessary for those already working as Job Coaches. For example, experienced craftsmen and technicians are currently working in Job Coach roles and although

¹¹ As indicated by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (DSM-V; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) / International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision (ICD-10; World Health Organisation 2016)

some will have specific psychological or educational training, this is currently not mandatory in the UK. As Job Coaching staff trained to new qualification standards will initially not be available in sufficient numbers, it was agreed among partner organisations that there should be a transitional time period in that a non-academic qualification is considered acceptable

Additionally, it was agreed that an EQF 5 option (SCHE/ "short cycle higher education") should remain available; in the UK, this equates to a Higher National Certificate (HNC) and the Higher National Diploma (HND). To take account of different national regulations with respect to labour markets, disability funding and social services, it was recommended that each partner country develop a national curriculum that takes account of these specific aspects and this is addressed below for the UK.

2.2 Learning success, examinations, graduation

Given that presently there are no agreed standards in the UK, there is no guidance on Learning outcomes, examinations or graduation levels. These will have to be established in line with European Standards (Product 2).

3. Content of further education

In terms of providing support for those with learning disabilities, mental health issue, and/or autism, the needs of the service users will be very individual, but a common curriculum should include the following learning outcomes:

3.1 Module1: Approaching the labour market

- Employment, disability and benefits legislation
- Recent labour market data; analyzing trends, engaging with emerging and existing markets
- Tailoring employment around company policy: how to move within the company, requirements and experience
- Support structures for people with disabilities who wish to work in the free market

3.2 Module 2: Knowledge of the clinical picture

- Specific disabilities and their potential impact in seeking work
- Medical and diagnostic aspects

- Psychological aspects
- Educational support for people with disabilities

3.3 Module 3: Creation of work places

Job matching:

- functional assessment,
- creating a vocational profile,
- promoting strengths and addressing skills deficits using behaviour-based interventions (e.g. shaping, video modelling, use of apps)

3.4 Module 4: Support in the workplace and transfer into employment

Providing support structures in the workplace

- Recording and monitoring progress
- Data protection
- Protection for vulnerable adults (e.g. anti-bullying measures and sexual exploitation prevention)

3.5 Module 5: Stabilising employment

- Ongoing support: Fading support and maintenance of skills over time
- Continuous monitoring of progress
- Continuous professional development: Awareness of new technologies and research that can contribute to a stable working environment

3.6 Module 6: Individual educational support

- Evidence based practice
- Continuous professional development: awareness of new technologies and research that can contribute to a stable working environment
- Accessing educational support for people with disabilities

Outlook

It is expected that agreed European Standards for Job Coaches will be adopted in the UK.